



## Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Prairie Chicken Habitat Partnership of the Southern Red River Valley - Phase V  
Laws of Minnesota 2019 Final Report

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### General Information

**Date:** 08/24/2023

**Project Title:** Prairie Chicken Habitat Partnership of the Southern Red River Valley - Phase V

**Funds Recommended:** \$2,558,000

**Legislative Citation:** ML 2019, 1st Sp. Session, Ch. 2, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd, 2(h)

**Appropriation Language:** \$2,558,000 the first year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Pheasants Forever, in cooperation with the Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society, to acquire lands in fee and restore and enhance lands in the southern Red River valley for wildlife management under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.05, subdivision 8, or to be designated and managed as waterfowl production areas in Minnesota in cooperation with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. Subject to evaluation criteria in Minnesota Rules, part 6136.0900, priority must be given to acquiring lands that are eligible for the native prairie bank under Minnesota Statutes, section 84.96, or lands adjacent to protected native prairie. A list of proposed land acquisitions must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

### Manager Information

**Manager's Name:** Steven Burdick

**Title:** MN Project Manager

**Organization:** MN Prairie Chicken Society / Pheasants Forever, Inc.

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### Location Information

**County Location(s):** Norman and Clay.

**Eco regions in which work will take place:**

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Prairie

**Activity types:**

- Protect in Fee

**Priority resources addressed by activity:**

- Prairie

## Narrative

### Summary of Accomplishments

In phase V of this program, we purchased two properties totaling 1,076 acres, which exceeds our acre goal by 408 acres. The Prosby addition to the Cupido WMA in Norman County was 955 acres, and the Lehrke addition to the Parke WPA in Clay County was 121 acres. Upon purchase, we restored the uplands and wetlands to the fullest extent possible. Both tracts have been transferred to either the MN DNR or USFWS.

### Process & Methods

In collaboration with the MN Prairie Chicken Society, Pheasants Forever strategically acquired two parcels totaling 1,076 acres for the benefit of Greater Prairie Chicken populations in MN. All acquired tracts have been enrolled into the state Wildlife Management Area (WMA) Program or the Waterfowl Production Area Program (WPA) and will be protected and managed in perpetuity by the Minnesota DNR or USFWS. These purchases address the need to protect nesting and brood rearing habitat in close proximity to leks for Greater prairie chickens. In addition to the wildlife benefits, all properties are open to all peoples to enjoy.

Parcels were identified jointly with the MN DNR and USFWS, ranked, and prioritized on habitat goals and feasibility. Pheasants Forever and agency staff collaborated to generate a list of parcels with landowners who had the desire to sell. These parcels ecological impact was evaluated using landscape level planning tools such as the USFWS Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET), The MN Prairie Conservation Plan and The Pheasant Action Plan among other. By utilizing these tools, we were able to focus efforts in areas where acquisitions and restorations will make the greatest impact on the landscape and thus these additional acres of WMA are very beneficial to wildlife and public recreation.

Offers to landowners were based on fair market value as indicated in an independent appraisal. Once acquired, drained wetlands on each parcel were restored by installing surface ditch “plugs” and or breaking subsurface tile. Some wetlands may also have had sediment removed to create proper substrates for wetland function and vegetative growth. Grasslands were restored by planting high-diversity native seed mix of grasses and forbs that are regionally appropriate to the area. As with all restoration work, there are challenges that come from weather and working with private contractors, but we did not face any major issues.

### **How did the program address habitats of significant value for wildlife species of greatest conservation need, threatened or endangered species, and/or list targeted species?**

SGCN and T&E were a major consideration when evaluating acquisitions, considering the primary focus of this program is to protect and restore Greater prairie chicken habitat. Parcels with identified SGCN/T&E species were ranked more favorably than parcels without. In addition to the Greater Prairie chicken, species of concern that will benefit from these projects include the short-eared owl, marsh hawk and yellow rail. To maximize our impact, acquisitions in this program add to existing WMA or WPA habitat complexes. Many of these complexes are the strongholds for species of wildlife including SGCN and T&E species. By increasing the size and connectivity of these complexes many species are benefited. The parcels acquired and restored as part of this phase add to the quantity and quality of grasslands and wetlands that are available to species such as mallards, black terns, bobolinks, meadowlarks, and the ring-necked pheasant.

## How did the program use science-based targeting that leveraged or expanded corridors and complexes, reduced fragmentation, or protected areas in the MN County Biological Survey.

Each potential acquisition tract was developed, reviewed, and selected in conjunction with the MN DNR and USFWS area managers and acquisition staff. Partners employ numerous planning and evaluation tools including the DNR SWAAT scoring tool and USFWS HAPET modeling (breeding duck density maps) to identify quality habitat tracts that also meet recreational requirements. Additionally conservation plans such as the MN Prairie Conservation Plan and the Pheasant Action Plan, take corridors and complexes into account when creating focus areas. These focus areas are part of the evaluation process used to evaluate parcels for acquisition.

## Explain Partners, Supporters, & Opposition

Pheasants Forever and the MN Prairie Chicken Society worked closely with the MN DNR and USFWS to find and evaluate the best properties based on the criteria listed in the process and methods section. During the process, we also worked with many other partners to gauge interest levels and determine if the property is suitable for a WMA or WPA. As with any acquisition program there is occasional opposition, however during the acquisition of the tracts in this phase no significant issues occurred.

## Exceptional challenges, expectations, failures, opportunities, or unique aspects of program

Under this program phase, we were able to purchase one of the highest priority parcels for Greater prairie chicken conservation as identified by the DNR. Both tracts build on existing habitat complexes in MN.

## What other dedicated funds may collaborate with or contribute to this program?

- N/A

## What is the plan to sustain and/or maintain this work after the Outdoor Heritage Funds are expended?

All acquisition's in this appropriation have been transferred to the MN DNR or USFWS for enrollment into the Wildlife Management Area program or Waterfowl Production Area. All parcels have been fully restored, and long-term management and maintenance of these WMA's and WPA's will be the responsibility of the MN DNR or USFWS.

## Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2024 and beyond	PF, Local, Federal, DNR	Identify Management Concerns	Work with DNR/USFWS on management.	-

## Budget

### Totals

Item	Requested	AP Amount	Spent	Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$19,000	\$34,000	\$30,300	-	-	-	\$19,000	\$30,300
Contracts	\$434,000	\$419,000	\$411,700	-	-	-	\$434,000	\$411,700
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$1,200,000	\$1,800,000	\$1,800,200	\$13,400	\$206,000	PCS, PF, Federal, Private	\$1,213,400	\$2,006,200
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$800,000	\$200,000	\$201,200	\$13,400	\$162,400	PCS, PF, Federal, Private	\$813,400	\$363,600
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$1,300	\$1,300	\$1,000	-	-	-	\$1,300	\$1,000
Professional Services	\$48,000	\$48,000	\$7,100	-	\$1,100	Attorney Discount	\$48,000	\$8,200
Direct Support Services	\$7,600	\$7,600	\$6,700	-	-	-	\$7,600	\$6,700
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$24,100	\$24,100	\$24,100	-	-	-	\$24,100	\$24,100
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	\$24,000	\$24,000	\$8,500	-	-	-	\$24,000	\$8,500
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$2,558,000</b>	<b>\$2,558,000</b>	<b>\$2,490,800</b>	<b>\$26,800</b>	<b>\$369,500</b>	-	<b>\$2,584,800</b>	<b>\$2,860,300</b>

### Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Amount Spent	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
State Coordinator-MN	0.013	3.0	\$4,000	-	-	\$4,000
PF Field Staff	0.03	3.0	\$19,000	-	-	\$19,000
PF Grants Staff	0.03	3.0	\$7,300	-	-	\$7,300

### Direct Support Services

**How did you determine which portions of the Direct Support Services of your shared support services is direct to this program?**

PF utilizes the Total Modified Direct Cost method. This methodology is annually approved by the U.S. Department of Interior's National Business Center as the basis for the organization's Indirect Cost Rate agreement. PF's allowable direct support services cost is 4.12%. In this proposal, PF has discounted its rate to 1.5% of the sum of personnel, contracts, professional services, and travel. We are donating the difference in-kind.

**Explain any budget challenges or successes:**

Our partnership brought \$369,507.00 of non-state match to this proposal. We were able to purchase and restore more acres than proposed, complete all work under budget, and on time. The successful completion of this program phase illustrates the efficiency this partnership between PF and MPCS has created. All goals outlined in the proposal were exceeded and were completed under budget.

**Total Revenue:** \$17,480

**Revenue Spent:** \$17,480

**Revenue Balance:** \$0

**Of the money disclosed above, what are the appropriate uses of the money:**

- B. This revenue, or a portion of it, was used for other purposes as approved in the AP by the LSOHC.

**Itemize out how the revenues were spent:**

Annual Tax statements - \$12,198.57

Construction contracts - \$4,573.00

Materials - \$144.35

Admin - \$564.38

## Output Tables

### Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Type	Wetland (AP)	Wetland (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	Forest (AP)	Forest (Final)	Habitat (AP)	Habitat (Final)	Total Acres (AP)	Total Acres (Final)
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	400	955	0	0	0	0	400	955
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	267	121	0	0	0	0	267	121
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>667</b>	<b>1,076</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>667</b>	<b>1,076</b>

### How many of these Prairie acres are Native Prairie? (Table 1b)

Type	Native Prairie (AP)	Native Prairie (Final)
Restore	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	13	171
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0
Enhance	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>171</b>

### Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland (AP)	Wetland (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	Forest (AP)	Forest (Final)	Habitat (AP)	Habitat (Final)	Total Funding (AP)	Total Funding (Final)
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	\$1,534,800	\$2,225,200	-	-	-	-	\$1,534,800	\$2,225,200
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	\$1,023,200	\$281,100	-	-	-	-	\$1,023,200	\$281,100
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$2,558,000</b>	<b>\$2,506,300</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$2,558,000</b>	<b>\$2,506,300</b>

### Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro / Urban (AP)	Metro / Urban (Final)	Forest / Prairie (AP)	Forest / Prairie (Final)	SE Forest (AP)	SE Forest (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	N. Forest (AP)	N. Forest (Final)	Total (AP)	Total (Final)
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	53	0	0	0	347	955	0	0	400	955
Protect in	0	0	27	0	0	0	240	121	0	0	267	121

Fee w/o State PILT Liability													
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>587</b>	<b>1,076</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>667</b>	<b>1,076</b>	

## Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro / Urban (AP)	Metro / Urban (Final)	Forest / Prairie (AP)	Forest / Prairie (Final)	SE Forest (AP)	SE Forest (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	N. Forest (AP)	N. Forest (Final)	Total (AP)	Total (Final)
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	\$204,600	-	-	-	\$1,330,200	\$2,225,200	-	-	\$1,534,800	\$2,225,200
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	\$102,300	-	-	-	\$920,900	\$281,100	-	-	\$1,023,200	\$281,100
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	-	-	<b>\$306,900</b>	-	-	-	<b>\$2,251,100</b>	<b>\$2,506,300</b>	-	-	<b>\$2,558,000</b>	<b>\$2,506,300</b>

## Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

## Outcomes

### Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

- Protected, restored, and enhanced nesting and migratory habitat for waterfowl, upland birds, and species of greatest conservation need ~ *Neither of the two parcels were in the forest-prairie Region.*

### Programs in prairie region:

- Key core parcels are protected for fish, game and other wildlife ~ *Two parcels, totaling 1,076 acres were purchased, and restored to the greatest extent possible. Both parcels are located in areas that are identified as core areas or corridors for Greater prairie chickens; however, all area wildlife will benefit from these acquisitions.*



## Parcels

### Sign-up Criteria?

No

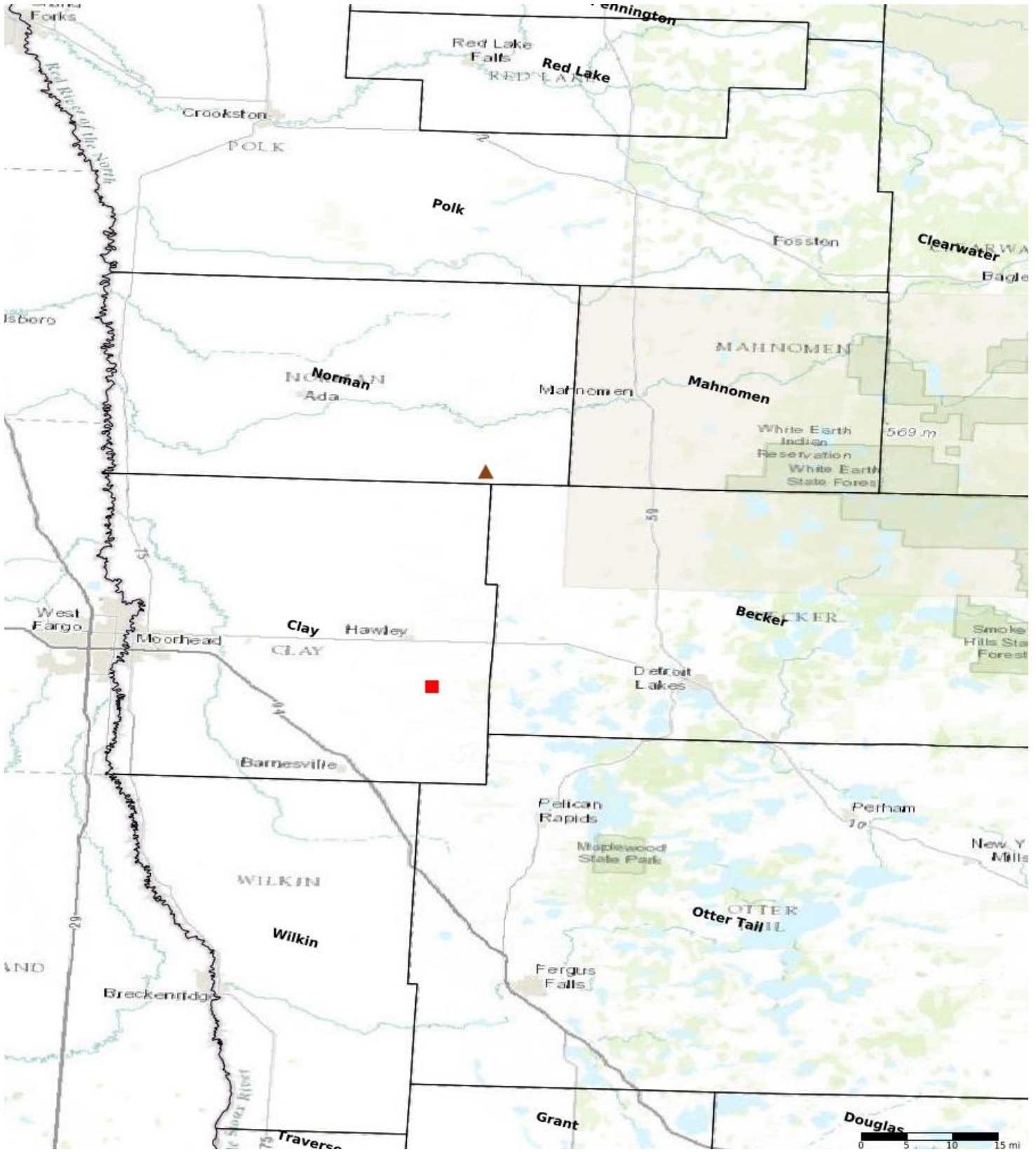
### Fee Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Parke WPA	Clay	13844205	121	\$360,000	No

### Fee Parcels with Buildings

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection	Buildings	Value of Buildings
Prosby/Cupido WMA addition	Norman	14344225	955	\$1,800,000	No	1	\$0

# Parcel Map



- Protect in Easement
- ▲ Protect in Fee with PILT
- Protect in Fee W/O PILT
- ★ Restore
- ✦ Enhance
- ⊕ Other